



# THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

*Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management*

## Rain gauge network ready for Spring

by Bruce Boe

Once again, it's April. In North Dakota, that means two things: the arrival of spring, and the deployment of the roughly 900 rain gauges used by the Atmospheric Resource Board's Cooperative Observer Network (ARBCON). For over twenty years, volunteers across the state have recorded and reported daily rainfall totals during the growing-season months of April, May, June, July, August, and September. Hail size and damage is also reported when it occurs.

Each spring and summer, after the gauges have taken their places on posts in fields, pastures, and back yards throughout every county, their owners have each morning vigilantly measured and recorded the rainfall

received during the preceding 24-hours. Whenever rainfall totaling an inch or more was observed, the observers immediately telephoned the National Weather Service office in Bismarck, where the observations were employed by the hydrologist.

This year, the ARBCON observers may play an even greater role. With heavy snowfalls producing record and near-record snowpack across much of the eastern and northern portions of the state, the spring rainfall may play a major role in determining the severity of the flooding. While flooding in these areas appears very likely even without additional precipitation, more rain at the wrong time could make the situation much worse. So this year, the ARBCON observations of one-inch-and-greater, reported to

the National Weather Service in either Bismarck or Grand Forks (depending upon the observer's county), will be more important than ever.

With an average of seventeen observers per county, if you're a rural resident chances are pretty good that one or more of your neighbors serves as part of the network! If you're interested in the data recorded by the network, check out the website below. ■

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North Dakota State Water Commission  
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**Total North Dakota rainfall for April through September, 1996, as reported by the ARBCON observers. County lines and drainage basin boundaries are shown.**